

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USDEL VLADIVOSTOK IMMEDIATE

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 259241

EXDIS TOSEC 366

FOLLOWING REPEATTEL AVIV 6778 SENT ACTION SECSTATE

INFO BEIRUT CAIRO AMMAN DAMASCUS USUN MOSCOW

NOVEMBER 23RD:

QUOTE S E C R E T TEL AVIV 6778

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, IS, XF

SUBJ: ALLON ON RENEWAL OF UNDOF MANDATE

DEPAT PLS PASS SECRETARY'S PARTY

1. DURING NOV. 22 CONVERSTATION WITH FONMIN ALLON I ASKED FOR HIS VIEWS ON UDOF MANDATE RENEWAL ISSUE. ALLON SAID HE THOUGHT THAT, IN THE END, THE SYRIANS WOULD RENEW. IF THEY DID, HE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE FOR NOT LESS THAN SIX MONTHS.

2. ALLON SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT SYRIANS WERE READY FOR A WAR OR, THAT EGYPTIANS WERE EITHER AND DID NOT WANT ONE. GIVEN SYRIANS DEPENDENCE ON SOVIET SUPPORT, HE THOUGHT IT HIGHLY ILLOGICAL FOR SOVIETS TO AGREE TO A SYRIAN ACTION WHICH COULD LEAD TO HOSTILITIES OR, AT A MINIMUM, BE HIGHLY DESTABILIZING IN ME AREA. THIS

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WOULD BE ESPECIALLY TRUE ONLY A FEW DAYS AFTER PRESIDENT'S

MEETING WITH BREZHNEV IN VLADIVOSTOCK WHERE, HE THOUGHT, SOVIETS WOULD BE MAKING MAJOR EFFORT TO PERSUADE NEW PRESIDENT TO CONTINUE "DETENTE" POLICIES. OF COURSE, ISRAEL HAD TO CONSIDER POSSIBILITY THAT LOGIC WOULD NOT BE GUIDING PRINCIPLE IN SITUATION AND ARAB EUPHORIA IN AFTERMATH OF RABAT AND UNGA COULD HAVE DANGEROUS CONSEQUENCES.

3. ALLON TOLD ME THAT GOI CONSIDERED THAT UNDOF PRESENCE WAS PART AND PARCEL OF DISENGAGEMENT AGREEMENT, THOUGH NO FORMAL POSITION HAD YET BEEN TAKEN. IF THAT ELEMENT WERE REMOVED, ISRAELIS WOULD CONSIDER REST OF ARRANGEMENT TO BE INVALID (HE SAID GOVT LAWYERS WERE UNANIMOUSLY OF THIS OPINION). I ASKED ALLON WHAT HE ENVISAGED IF MANDATE WERE NOT RENEWED, MENTIONING ARTICLES IN ISRAELI PRESS AND RADIO COMMENTS, AMONG OTHERS ONE BY CHAIM HERZOG, FORMER GENERAL AND RESPECTED MILITARY COMMENTATOR, THAT THIS WOULD CONSTITUTE A CAUSUS BELLI. ALLON QUICKLY PUT THAT IDEA DOWN AS FAR AS HE WAS CONCERNED, THOUGH HE SAID THERE WERE ELEMENTS IN AND OUT OF GOVT, INCLUDING SOME INFLUENTIAL MINISTERS, WHO WERE THINKING IN SUCH TERMS. IN ORDER TO PREVENT PREMATURE AND UNHELPFUL HARDENING OF POSITION ON THIS ISSUE, HE SAID HE HAD ASKED PM RABIN TO DELAY CABINET CONSIDERATION OF SUBJECT FOR ANOTHER WEEK, DESPITE NEARING DEADLINE.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A FURTHER QUESTION, ALLON CONFIRMED THAT IN HIS VIEW REMOVAL OF UNDOF ALONE WOULD NOT BE SUFFICIENT REASON TO GO TO WAR. HOWEVER, ANY CHANGE IN ARRANGEMENTS ON GROUND, WHETHER MOVEMENT OF FORCES INTO BUFFER ZONE OR INTRODUCTION OF ADDITIONAL WEAPONS INTO LIMITED ARMAMENT ZONES, WOULD BE SOMETHING ELSE. IN ANY EVENT, ALLON SAID, UNDOF REMOVAL WOULD CREATE SITUATION OF SUCH TENSION AND FRAGILITY THAT IT WAS HARD TO SEE HOW SERIOUS DETERIORATION OF SECURITY SITUATION COULD BE AVOIDED.

5. ALLON CONTINUED BY OBSERVING THAT WHILE ISRAELIS COULD NOT MAKE SYRIANS RENEW MANDATE, THEY WERE TRYING TO ASSURE THAT SYRIANS WERE AWARE OF IMPLICATIONS OF A FAILURE TO DO SO. HE NOTED THAT SOME MILITARY EXPERTS THOUGHT THAT A WINTER WAR ON THE GOLAN- WITH WEATHER AND GROUND CONDITIONS THAT MIGHT LIMIT FULL EFFECTIVENESS OF ISRAELI AIR AND ARMOR- WOULD SIMILARLY AFFECT SYRIANS.

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6. ALLON CONCLUDED CONVERSATION BY SAYING THAT HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS KEY AMBASSADORS TO ASSURE THAT ALL INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS WERE FULLY INFORMED OF SERIOUSNESS OF SITUATION AND WERE AWARE OF HOW UNDOF WITHDRAWAL WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THEIR INTERESTS. ISRAEL WOULD NOT BEG FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT IN THIS SITUATION; IT WAS UP TO GOVERNMENTS TO SEE WHERE THEIR INTERESTS LAY.

7. COMMENT: THROUGHOUT OUR DISCUSSION ALLON MAINTAINED A CALM AND OBJECTIVE ATTITUDE, THOUGH THIS ISSUE, WITH ITS RAPIDLY BURNING FUSE, IS BEGINNING TO PREOCCUPY ISRAELI POLITICAL AND MILITARY LEADERSHIP. ALLON, ALONG WITH VIRTUALLY EVERYONE ELSE IN ISRAEL, IS OBVIOUSLY CONFIDENT THAT ISRAEL COULD WIN A WAR WITH SYRIA NOW, IF WAR WAS FORCED UPON HER. HOWEVER, HE APPEARED TO SINCERELY WISH TO AVOID EXACERBATION OF SITUATION IN NORTH IN DAYS AHEAD.
KEATING

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